



120 State Street - Montpelier, VT 05620-2501 - (802) 828-3135 - www.education.vermont.gov

THE IMPORTANCE OF MORE TIME FOR LEARNING

Vermont's Afterschool & Summertime Programs

MONTPELIER – Repeated studies have shown that students lose knowledge and skills when they do not engage in educational activities over the summer break. Of even more concern, are the effects of summer learning loss on low-income students and struggling learners.

One way to prevent learning loss is to participate in summer learning programs. Vermont's afterschool and summertime programs bolster innovative learning opportunities and promote positive intellectual, physical, emotional, and social growth. Children's minds are always open for learning activities and Vermont's summertime programs are a positive way to engage them.

"We know that the only way to truly close the achievement gap is by providing extended day learning opportunities/afterschool programs and positive educational experiences in the summer," said Secretary of Education Armando Vilaseca. "Research shows that high-quality learning programs for kids at risk can increase success in school and reduce negative behaviors. It's simple really, invest now and save later."

The Vermont Agency of Education (VT-AOE) partners with ORCA Media to host a monthly video series titled "[Education – Join the Conversation](#)." Each month Secretary Vilaseca invites education stakeholders to be a part of the conversation, exploring the challenges and opportunities of our students and our schools. This summer Secretary Vilaseca will highlight issues of poverty, summer reading loss, extended day learning and afterschool programs, flexible pathways/dual enrollment, and Vermont's education quality standards.

"Historically our school schedule was designed to accommodate Vermont's agricultural season. However, a 21st Century model needs to be considered. We are expecting more of our schools and students while relying on the 18th century model of society. We need to embrace the idea of looking at our school year in a new way," said Secretary Vilaseca. "Vermonters are innovators and collaborators, and if we keep in mind what is best for our kids and our schools I know we can figure this out together."

In the second meeting of the summer series, Secretary Vilaseca spoke with Emanuel Betz, 21st Century Community Learning Centers ([21c](#)) State Coordinator, Holly Morehouse, [Vermont Afterschool](#) Director, and Ginny Burley, [Community Connections](#) Director, about the importance of summer learning. They discussed the many offerings of quality afterschool/summer programs: giving young people the chance to explore different ways of learning, opportunities to practice and acquire new skills, and a safe environment in which to form healthy relationships with adults in their community. The video is available online: <http://bit.ly/ZKPO43>.

The VT-AOE conducts grant competitions for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program. Vermont's 21st CCLC program seeks to enhance students' academic achievements and foster lifelong interests in the arts, recreation, and other areas through high-quality, out-of-school learning opportunities.

"The importance of having more time to learn and achieve, to lead, to dig your teeth into new projects, and to develop meaningful and healthy lifelong habits are priceless for students, and for all of us," said Emanuel Betz, VT-AOE 21c State Coordinator.

For the 2013-14 school year, the VT-AOE will distribute \$5.5 million in federally funded competitive grant awards that will serve 15,000 students from kindergarten through 12th grade. Investments are targeted to more than 120 lower income communities. The funds support programs delivered by both school and community based educators. Sequestration (federal cuts to the program) in 2013-14 will amount to \$282,160.

"Afterschool and summer programs play a critical role in our ability to provide the 'level playing field' that the public education system offers to ensure equity and access for all kids and families," said Ginny Burley, Director of [Community Connections](#). "Out-of-school experiences are just as important as in-school experiences when it comes to closing the achievement gap."

Research tells us that youth who are engaged in constructive pursuits during their free time are more likely to develop initiative, better understand themselves in relation to others, experience optimism toward the future, and acquire skills and competencies that promote a successful transition to adulthood.

"Children spend, on average, 1,000 hours a year in school but 5,000 hours in their communities and with their families," said Holly Morehouse, Director of [Vermont Afterschool](#). "How they spend this time can facilitate positive development and growth experiences, or place them at risk for negative outcomes. We know that the time students spend out of school matters."

Once the school doors close for the summer, many children do not have access to books and educational opportunities. An additional challenge is meeting their basic needs such as food, security, structure, and the social networks needed for success. Summertime is an opportunity for kids to get involved in their communities and check out one of Vermont's many summer learning programs.

Learn more about *Education – Join the Conversation* here: <http://bit.ly/W7XiVA>. The monthly video series is currently airing on [Central Vermont Television](#) (CCTV), [Lake Champlain Access Television](#) (LCATV), [Onion River Community Access Media](#) (ORCA), and [Regional Educational Technology Network](#) (RETN).

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